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CONTACT: Ken August
or Lea Brooks
(916) 440-7660

STATE HEALTH OFFICER ASKS HEALTHY INDIVIDUALS TO FORGO FLU SHOTS THIS YEAR DUE TO VACCINE SHORTAGE

SACRAMENTO – State Public Health Officer Dr. Richard Joseph Jackson asked healthy Californians today to forgo a flu shot this year to ensure that vaccine is available for individuals at highest risk of pneumonia and other flu-related complications. His request follows yesterday's announcement by Chiron Corp. that none of its flu vaccine manufactured in Liverpool, England, would be available this flu season due to manufacturing problems, reducing the United States' vaccine supply by half.

"There will be some individuals who want flu shots this year who will be unable to get one," Jackson said. "I'm strongly encouraging Californians who are not at high-risk for complications from flu to not get a flu shot this year to ensure that young children, seniors, pregnant women those with chronic illness and healthcare workers get one."

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) this year ordered from Chiron 573,500 doses for distribution to local health departments for low-income individuals 60 years and older and those under 60 with chronic health conditions. None of this vaccine is now available.

"We are searching for additional influenza vaccine to purchase and are on a waiting list to purchase additional doses," Jackson said. "We are also working with local health departments, healthcare providers and community immunization clinics to ensure that individuals in high-risk groups are given the highest priority for flu shots."

CDHS also ordered and expects to receive soon vaccine from Aventis-Pasteur for the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Vaccine for Children Program, including 710,000 doses for distribution to private health care providers who see children 18 and under covered by Medi-Cal or the Child Health and Disability Prevention Program. Another 105,000 doses will be distributed to local health departments for low-income children 18 and under.

Yesterday, CDC identified individuals in the following groups at highest risk for very serious or life-threatening illness from the flu for flu shots this season:

- All children aged 6-23 months.
- Adults 65 years and older.
- Individuals aged 2-64 with underlying chronic medical conditions.
- All women who will be pregnant during influenza season.
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.
- Children 6 months to 18 years of age on chronic aspirin therapy.
- Healthcare workers with direct patient care.
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months.

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Jackson asked individuals who are not in the high-risk groups identified by CDC to forgo a flu shot this season.

Whether or not individuals are vaccinated this season, Jackson encouraged them to take the following steps to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses:

- Stay home when you are sick to avoid contact with co-workers and friends.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Properly dispose used tissues.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water or a hand sanitizer to help protect yourself from germs and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, drinking plenty of water, exercising, getting plenty of rest and not smoking.

* It is the intent of CDHS to accommodate all requests for interviews about the shortage of flu vaccine. Please call the department's Office of Public Affairs at 916/440-7660 to set up an interview. We can also accommodate interviews in Spanish.